

## **Natural Outlook December 2011**

### **Central Texas Environmental Summit Draws 300**

#### **Transcript of: Keynote Session Highlights Central Texas Environmental Summit**

Andy Saenz, TCEQ Communications Director: We have a full day of activities for you, some excellent presentations this morning. Later in the morning, as you can see from the schedule, we've got townhall meetings across the hall. We are so lucky that so many of your local lawmakers have agreed to come and be with us this morning to host these townhall meetings and talk to you about the issues that are important to you. So very, very happy to have those. And of course a little bit further down the hall we've got some outstanding displays and exhibits. We've got, I think, about 30 of them. Lots of TCEQ information for you, but also we're very proud that many of our partners are here. They have brought information and their displays to talk about their organizations and how we work together. And that's the key, folks, that we work together with our partners in this region.

Rep. John Kuemple: Welcome everybody. As we know, Central Texas is one of the most beautiful areas in the state, and rich in diverse resources. The Central Texas area's population is booming and the economy expanding, but the economy and the economy's growth present challenges that we have going forward. In particular, the growth and development we have along the I-35 corridor from Austin to San Antonio has highlighted the need for focus on air quality and water conservation. I was pleased that the TCEQ recognized the uniqueness of our communities and this area, and provided an opportunity today for local individuals to identify important environmental issues, identify solutions, and most importantly implement those solutions.

TCEQ Commissioner Carlos Rubinstein: I do want to talk about one particular environmental pressure that is facing all of us across Texas and that is the drought. I know that we will be hearing a little bit about that in just a second, but just to put it in perspective, the drought that we are experiencing today, the drought that we've experienced this year, is unlike any drought that any of us have ever seen. It may not be the drought of record yet, but we know it is the worst one-year drought we have ever seen in Texas. And we just don't know when it's going to end. Let me put it in perspective a little bit more. In 2009, when the drought started-- we had a little reprieve last year when it rained a little bit-- we thought that it was already pretty bad. And when we finished that year we were amazed and concerned that 70 counties in Texas had reached an exceptional or extraordinary drought stage. And that was very difficult for us to manage. What wouldn't we do today to be back in 2009! Today in Texas we don't have 70 counties that are in exceptional drought conditions. We have 254, but nobody, no single area of the state, has been able to grasp and tackle its water problems better, I think, than San Antonio. And I think that you all lead in that effort and that there's a lot for us to learn as well.

SAWS President Robert R. Puente: So the perfect blend for dealing with a drought is a combination of water conservation, the water you do have how you manage it, and diversifying your supply. We have to optimize the Edwards Aquifer. We here in Central Texas are very very blessed with that Edwards Aquifer. All the way from Uvalde coming east all the way to Hayes County, a beautiful aquifer, very clean pristine water, very plentiful water. Unfortunately we are restricted on the amount that we can use by the state legislature and the federal government

because of state law and because of the endangered species act. So you have to optimize what you have. So you have to conserve what you have. We have a direct recycled water system which is the largest in the nation. A 112-mile ring around Bexar County of recycled water that sends water out to different customers. Toyota manufacturing is one of our best customers. Microsoft also is one of our big customers. As I mentioned, the aquifer storage and recovery where we pump water out of the Edwards and transport it into Southern Bexar County and inject it back into the Carrizo Aquifer for later use. And I'll talk a little bit more about that. And obviously there you'll see six other diverse supplies that we have to make sure that we have a diverse water portfolio. This is a very important and very interesting slide that we are proud of here in San Antonio. If you look at the last 25 years-- where were you 25 years ago? Imagine this I-35 corridor 25 years ago. In those 25 years SAWS has increased their customer base by 67 percent, but we're still using the same amount of water-- zero percent more water used. Sixty-seven percent more customers, zero percent more water pumped from all sources. So that's a tremendous savings. If we had not reduced our per capita use, if we still had to use the same amount of water per person and we had that 67 percent growth, we would have needed an additional 121,000 acre-feet of water for those individuals for that growth.